

To: Corporate and Finance Services Committee

From: Stephanie Sinnott, Commissioner,
Corporate and Finance Services Department

Report Number: CF-25-16

Date of Report: February 26, 2025

Date of Meeting: March 3, 2025

Subject: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Champions Awards Program

Ward: All Wards

File: 03-05

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide information and seek approval on a proposed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (D.E.I.) Champions Awards program to recognize individuals and organizations as D.E.I. Champions.

2.0 Recommendation

That the Corporate and Finance Services Committee recommend to City Council:

That based on Report CF-25-16, dated February 28, 2025, the Oshawa Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Champions Awards program be approved.

3.0 Input From Other Sources

The following have provided input into this report:

- Corporate Communications
- Economic Development Services
- Legislative Services
- Community Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee (C.D.E.I.C.)
- Other municipalities and granting agencies (City of Toronto, City of Vancouver, City of Pickering, Government of Ontario, University of Calgary and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce).

4.0 Analysis

4.1 Rationale for a D.E.I. Champions Awards Program

Creating a City of Oshawa D.E.I. Champions Awards program is a meaningful way to recognize and amplify efforts that build a more welcoming, fair, and inclusive city. This award would honour not only individuals and organizations that have made significant progress in D.E.I., but also those whose work may not receive traditional recognition. By increasing the visibility of these efforts, the award can raise public awareness and encourage a wider range of residents, organizations, and businesses to engage and lead their own D.E.I. initiatives.

The program could also inspire local action toward a more inclusive and equitable Oshawa by showcasing best practices in diversity, equity and inclusion. Award recipients may motivate others to adopt similar strategies in areas like employment, community programs, and public services. This could also lead to the development of more inclusive policies within the municipality as well.

Furthermore, the D.E.I. Champions Awards program would underscore the City's commitment to D.E.I. by drawing public attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion as fundamental community priorities. This recognition can strengthen public trust in local government, demonstrating that officials are genuinely dedicated to building an inclusive society.

4.2 Strategic Connection and Internal Alignment with Existing Awards Programs

During the preparation stage of the 2024-2027 Oshawa Strategic Plan (O.S.P.), it was noted that the community aspires for Oshawa to be inclusive, diverse, welcoming and accessible. A key Priority Area in the O.S.P. is "Belong", echoing this sentiment to create an inclusive, healthy community. Recognizing leaders in D.E.I. practices or programs can be an important part of helping the City to meet these goals.

The 2017 Diversity and Inclusion Plan includes an action item to "identify and develop community diversity and inclusion sponsors and champions; recognize local leaders and institutions that advance the goals of equity and non-discrimination." This award directly responds to this action item by recognizing local leaders in a meaningful way.

The City of Oshawa currently provides Accessibility Improvement Awards to community individuals and organizations. This award focuses on initiatives that have improved service or access for individuals with disabilities. The award is presented annually at a Special Council meeting on Accessibility and Diversity and Inclusion.

Staff have reviewed other internal awards programs including the Culture Counts Awards, the Community Legend Award, and, where appropriate, alignment of process and timelines have been considered and adopted for the proposed D.E.I. Champions Awards program.

4.3 Review of Other D.E.I. Award Programs

4.3.1 City of Toronto - Access, Equity and Human Rights Awards

The City of Toronto's Access, Equity and Human Rights Awards recognizes people and organizations that have created a more equitable city by advancing reconciliation and justice, addressing discrimination, and working to eliminate barriers to equity.

4.3.2 City of Vancouver Champion of Change Award

As part of their Awards of Excellence, Vancouver's council created a new award to acknowledge individuals or organizations working to create change in their communities, address systemic barriers, and create equitable opportunities for all Vancouver residents.

4.3.3 City of Pickering Cultural Diversity Award

This award is given to one or more individuals, groups or businesses from Pickering who have made a significant and sustained commitment to the promotion of cultural harmony in the City of Pickering.

4.3.4 University of Calgary Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Award

The University of Calgary E.D.I. Awards recognize outstanding achievement in practice, events, applied research, policy, programs, or other activities that foster equitable, sustainable and measurable change, especially for those who traditionally have been under-represented (women, visible/racialized minorities, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and L.G.B.T.Q.2S.+) on campus. The Awards recognize ongoing work or an outstanding accomplishment at a point in time.

4.3.5 Ontario Government Champion of Diversity Award

The Champion of Diversity Award, administered by the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism, recognizes individuals, groups and employers in three categories: inclusion and diversity, cross-cultural understanding, and business leadership in immigrant employment.

4.3.6 The Canadian Chamber of Commerce Champions of Inclusive Growth

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is proud to honour the winners of the prestigious Inclusive Growth Awards, recognizing outstanding efforts to advance economic reconciliation and foster diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the Canadian business landscape. These awards highlight the remarkable contributions of chambers of commerce, boards of trade, business members, and underrepresented entrepreneurs across the nation.

4.4 Recommended Program Details for Oshawa's D.E.I. Champions Awards Program

The following sections set out the recommended program for the D.E.I. Champions Awards Program.

4.4.1 Award Categories and Eligibility

The D.E.I. Champions Awards program will recognize the following achievements:

- Advocacy led by people from equity-deserving groups who are driving change or taking action on diversity, equity and inclusion; and/or,
- Organizations that have implemented equitable and inclusive hiring practices and workplaces; and/or,
- Individuals or organizations that are actively working to build a sense of inclusion and belonging in the community; and/or,
- Individuals or organizations that identify barriers for people from equity-deserving groups and work to address these barriers.

The D.E.I. Champions Award program will invite nominations from individuals, businesses, and community organizations in the following four (4) categories:

1. **Community Champion:** This Award will recognize an individual from an equity deserving group who is driving D.E.I. change in their community.
2. **Youth Champion:** This Award will recognize a youth (21 years of age and under) from an equity deserving group who is driving D.E.I. change in their school and/or larger community.
3. **Business Champion:** This Award will recognize a private business that is advocating for change and/or has implemented an initiative that embraces D.E.I. principles either internally or externally.
4. **Organization Champion:** This Award will recognize a charity, association, grassroots collective, or other non-profit organization, that is advocating for change and/or has implemented an initiative that embraces D.E.I. principles either internally or externally.

For each category noted above, City staff will develop an evaluation matrix and guideline for assessing the nominations. Criteria will focus on impact, community involvement and support, and supporting equity deserving communities.

Applicants cannot be self-nominated and must receive their nomination from an individual or organization who lives and/or does work in Oshawa. A vetting process may be conducted in addition to the application review to confirm the information provided in the application, including reference checks and site visits, where appropriate.

4.4.2 Selection Process

Nominations for the D.E.I. Champions Awards program will be reviewed by a selection committee consisting of members from the C.D.E.I.C and City staff. This peer review process will enable people from the community with lived and living experience to evaluate nominations and select the appropriate recipient. Only one awardee will be selected for each category. In some cases, an Honourable Mention will be made for other exemplary nominees.

This selection committee will make a recommendation for each award to the Corporate and Finance Committee. The Corporate and Finance Committee will review the recommendations of the selection committee and make a recommendation to City Council.

As is consistent with other City award programs, Council will have final authority over the selection of the award winners.

4.4.3 Next Steps and Timeline

Upon approval of this report, City staff will work with the C.D.E.I.C. to finalize the application and selection process and will work with Corporate Communications to develop a communication plan. Timing for communication and intake for the award will align with other City awards, including the Culture Counts Award and Community Legend Award and it is anticipated that the inaugural awards will be presented to award winners in the Spring 2026.

After the inaugural awards have been presented, staff will conduct an evaluation of the award program to identify potential areas for improvement in subsequent years. Community members will be invited to provide feedback to support this evaluation.

5.0 Financial Implications

There are minimal financial implications associated with the recommendation contained in this Report. Costs associated with the development and implementation of the D.E.I. Champions Awards program including communications materials, promotions and the preparation of the award plaques can be accommodated in the Diversity, Equity and Reconciliation annual Operating Budget.

6.0 Relationship to the Oshawa Strategic Plan

This report responds to the Oshawa Strategic Plan Priority Area “Lead: Governance and Service Excellence” with the goal to expand and embed equity, inclusion, accessibility, anti-racism and reconciliation across policies, practices, and procedures within the organization.



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